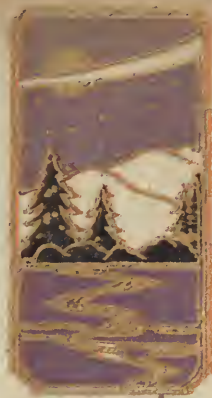


POEMS *of* THE PACIFIC

GUY SELWIN ALLISON



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POEMS OF THE PACIFIC



POEMS OF THE PACIFIC

By GUY SELWIN ALLISON



SAN FRANCISCO
1918

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By Guy Selwin Allison
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IN EXPLANATION

*I*N presenting this little volume, an explanation will doubtless be in order. For several years I have indulged my leisure time in writing down those thots which have been inspired by circumstances with which you will be familiarized as you scan these pages. No thot of publishing them in book form had entered my mind until, from time to time, those to whom I have sent the thots have suggested that they would enjoy having the entire collection. At last, those wishes have overcome my reticence, and I am presenting "Poems of the Pacific," with the sincere hope that this little volume may contain some thots which will help to brighten the lives of those of my relatives and friends who may find time to read it. Very frequently the interest in a poem is lost as the reader does not understand the circumstances under which it was written, hence each poem is preceded by an explanatory paragraph

GUY SELWIN ALLISON


San Francisco
December
1918

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POEMS OF THE PACIFIC

MY THOTS

 O you, my friends, these thots I send,
And with them kindest greeting,
They are but gleaned from incidents
In life, which I caught fleeting.

Some came to me at close of day,
When I was worn and weary,
And others stole upon me, too,
When the night was dark and dreary.

But some I drew from friendships dear,
As in fancy oft I saw them,
And some, like torrents rushing down
The mountain side, I caught them.

In musing, too, upon life's goal,
And on its Past Forever,
My muse into those realms would stroll,
And from them thots would sever.

Then, in the forest, oft alone,
Dear Nature heard my singing,
And sent her hosts of birds and leaves
To set my harp a-ringing.

She drew me to the ocean's side
Where I felt her great soul throbbing;
I copied there the song she sang,
'Twixt her constant moans and sobbing.

Accept these thots, will you, then, please,
For I am in them, living,
And remember too, that adage old,
"The soulless gift is not real giving."

JUST A-WONDERING

While living in Tacoma in 1908, upon returning from my school work one evening I found a letter from mother in which she said she was looking forward to my visit home that summer and was counting the days until I got home again. I sat for a long time in a reminiscent mood, picturing to myself our old home at Kirksville, Missouri. I had but recently been advised of the death of my boyhood chum, Jesse Rainwater, and consequently the thought of returning home was not unmingled with sadness. I sat up until almost midnight writing this little thing which I sent to mother in the next letter I wrote her.

IN silence and sadness I am musing alone,
While the evening's soft shadows slow fall,
And wondering how in the far-away home
Are my loved ones, each one and all.

I am wondering how 'round the hearth fire's bright
glow,

At the close of another short day,
My mother and father and one brother, too,
Are counting the hours till the day—
The day that the wanderer shall return to the fold,
To be home once again as of old.

I'm wondering, too, if the sweet smiles still play
On the faces of friends I have known,
And if they're still true to the right which they knew,
And are reaping the sweets they have sown.
I'm wondering, too, how 'twill seem to be there
And to miss a kind face I held dear,
Methinks that 'twill sadden my life just a bit
To be robbed of that sweetest of joy,
Of the heart-to-heart talk with the one who is gone,
With the one whom I loved as a boy.

I'm wondering, too, if the old home still stands
'Neath the wide-spreading maple nearby,
And if the peach trees in the rear of the yard
Still send forth their murmuring sighs.
I'm wondering, too, if the old apple tree
Still stands, all spreading and low,

As it did in the days when I lingered alone
In its shade, oh, so long, long ago,
And if the old pump, all moss covered o'er,
Still stands to keep guard by the old kitchen door.

I'm wondering, too, if my room looks the same,
With the walls in their blue coat so clean,
If the carpet of red, and the curtains of white,
And the chairs, and the bed, and the screen—all—
I'm wondering now if they look just the same
As they did when I bid them farewell,
Or are they all changed, or at least rearranged.
Ah, I wonder if all is still well.
But it bothers me not for I see them as such,
And Mother's dear hands will give them that touch.

So I wonder and ponder as night gathers in
All about me her mantle of gray,
And then I just think that the stars and the moon
Which are following in wake of the day,
Are guiding and guarding my loved ones so dear,
Far away toward the land of the morn.
And then, in sweet patience I wait for the dawn,
Which Aurora, in beauty adorns,
So I'm happy to believe that tho I'm away,
My absence is felt and for me some will pray.

LET A BOY BE A BOY

In the summer of 1907, while camping near Lake Washington with a schoolmate, Amor Foster, we frequently went out rowing in the evenings with young lady friends. During the daytime Amor worked at a saw mill, and naturally wore overalls and an old colored shirt. Sometimes he would be late in getting to camp and we would go out rowing before he had time to change his clothes. One evening I remonstrated with him for going out rowing with young ladies before he had dressed up. He remarked to me, "No dude for me. Just give me an old checkered shirt and a pair of overalls and I'm perfectly comfortable. If the girls don't like it they don't have to row with me." A few evenings later I wrote the following and gave it to him.



OME fellers, they say, would like to be big,
Wear collars an' cuffs, an' all that;
Have black shiny shoes, an' spectickles,
too,
Some sideburns, an' a big cady hat;
But fur me an' us kids, we've thunk it all out—
No doods among us, you kin bet—
Give us jus' overalls, an' a red checkered shirt,
An' any straw hat we kin get.

Don't keer fur no shoes, nor nothin' like that,
'Cuz our heels kin strike fire from the rocks;
It's nonsense to bother 'bout puttin' 'em all on,
An' besides then, you've got ter wear socks.
An' then, too, what sense is there wearin' fur
show,
A mustache, or sideburns, or specks?
Why, a feller's a fool, an' a big one at that,
Whin his face with thim things he all decks.

What need has a feller fur neckties an' cuffs,
When his neck an' his wrists should be bare?
'Cuz it takes so durn long fur to put 'em all on,
When he's swimmin' or chasin' a hare.
Now don't a kid look with a cane or a book,
When he kin fish or play hookey from school?
Why, it's such a surprise that it certainly lies
In the fact that he don't know the rule.


Fur it's honestly true that a feller would die
If he lived in the house all the time,
An' us kids all agree—'ceptin' jus' three—
That it's better to fish than learn rhyme.
But thim duffers is slow, as all of yer know—
Jus' wanter be smart in ther books,
But Bill, an' the rest, an' me, too, you bet,
Keer nothin' fur them, nor our looks.

Jus' remember this here what I'm tellin' to you,
'Cuz nobody thinks that it's rude,
Let a boy be a boy, fill his life with real joy,
'Cuz there's no use to make him a dood.
Let his bare feet get brown an' spread like a
duck's,
What matter's a stone bruise or two?
Let him wear overalls with patches galore,
Jus' like me, an' perhaps, maybe you.

Let him freckle his face like a turkey egg's is,
'Cuz it brings out the blush in his cheek;
An' then shear his head from his ears to his
crown—
Don't matter 'f he looks like a freak.
I tell yer this here's the way to be free,
Fur the girls 'll not bother yer long,—
Anyhow, it's the way that us kids has agreed,
That's the right one to live all along.

NIGHT IS NIGH

Sitting one evening on a log overlooking a pretty little lake, I was thinking of how beautiful it all was, when a friend came up and said, "How I would love to have a painting of this scene; can't you paint it for me?" He had been writing a letter and had his tablet with him. I requested a sheet of paper and his pencil. He handed them to me and sat down on the shore near me while I wrote the following.

HE sun has sunken in the west,
The gold gives way to gray,
The mountains lose their bold
outlines,
And indistinct they lay—
Receding far and meeting sky,
Yes, all is gray and night is nigh.

The lake which by the noonday sun
Was streaked with silver hues,
Reposes now in ashen gray,
While fall the evening dew.
And yet the shores by waves are lashed,
Which ebb and flow, still unabashed.

'Tis eventide and slumbers sweet
Shall soon close o'er my head,
While the lake's chafed shores shall lull
and soothe
Each harsh sound's troubled tread.
Yes, they shall be sweet lullabies,
For all is gray and night is nigh.

The night has come, all Nature lies,
In slumbers calm and deep,
And so I, too, with them must go,
And take my rest in sleep.
Yes, to my bed my way I'll hie,
For it is night and sleep is nigh.

WE PART TO MEET AGAIN

In the autumn of 1910, we moved from South Bend, Washington, to San Francisco. On the last Sunday we were there I was asked by the pastor of the Baptist Church to say a few words at the evening service. The request having been made in the afternoon previously, I sat down to think of what I should say. Strong ties of friendship had been formed while we lived at South Bend, and the idea of breaking these ties was an unpleasant one. After a half-hour's thinking, I wrote the following, which I gave as my little farewell talk.

WE part, beloved friends, today,
To meet, we know not when;
What course our lives asunder take
We know not now, but then,
Where'er we be, on land or sea,
His eye doth mark our ways,
And as the swift years take their flight,
And all our days turn yesterdays,
'Tis then, sweet friends, we'll cease to
roam,
And meet again in God's own home.

We part, beloved friends, 'tis true;
How sweet have grown our ties,
We've forged the links of friendships
dear,
In the fires of sacrifice.
We've welded them with arms of love,
Which bind each heart to heart,
What if our courses now divide,
We still are near, tho far apart.

We part, but we shall meet again,
If to His love each day we're true,
And some sweet day, I know not now,
He'll come again for me, and you;
And in one great triumphant march,
How sweet that course to heav'n will be,
We'll then go on, still hand in hand,
And be with God eternally.

MY SONG

Sitting in my room one dark stormy night after a long and tiresome day's work, I heard beneath me the strains of the Flower Song played by the young lady in whose home I was boarding. When she had about half finished I felt the soothing effect of the music. I sat thru to the end of the piece, and then going down stairs I asked her if she would play it again as it had given me a thot I wished to copy. Returning to my room I sat down and when the song was again completed I had written "My Song."

COMPANION of each weary hour,
And solace when life's storm clouds
lower,
Move on, thy measures soft and clear,
Inspire my soul and banish fear.
Flow thou through every fibre small
And bid doubts vanish at that call.
Just linger thou within my heart
When storms are rife and doubts oft
start;
Fill thou my soul to its o'erflow,
And purge thou it ere thou dost go.
Yea, grant to me thy healing balm,
Nor leave me long till I am calm.
Flow on, sweet song, sweet song, flow on,
Through darksome hours till peace shall
dawn.

THOU DYING DAY

On the last day of the year 1909, I was returning to Tacoma from Fort Morgan, Colorado, where I had been spending a few days with friends. We were in northern Wyoming and just as the sun went down the train passed over a high trestle, giving a splendid panorama in which the setting sun was the central feature. Realizing that that was the last time I should see a sunset in the old year I became reminiscent. I sent the enclosed thot in a letter to a friend.

O H, stay, thou lingering twilight, do,
For thy passing brings a tear;
Yea, at thy dying fades for aye
Another swift flown year.

Another year—how brief the time
Since first those bells so clear,
Upon the midnight's silent air,
Rang in thy welcome cheer.

Another year—ah, can it be
Twelve months have flown away,
And I have come so soon to see
Thy last, lone dying day?

Another year—ah, is it true
That each and every hope
Which yet has failed, but promised
bloom,
Must die before they ope?

Another year, ah, yes, 'tis true,
Has passed fore'er away,
And all its hopes yet unattained
Must die as dies this day.

Another year—"Forever past,"
My conscience says to me;
Well then, dear God, since such must be
I pledge myself to thee,—

That thru the coming year my work,
My plans, my all, shall be
Here dedicated to thy cause—
Myself I give to thee.

A SCENE ON PUGET SOUND

While attending the State Normal School at Bellingham, Washington, in the fall of 1906, it was always a favorite pleasure after the evening meal to stroll up to the top of Sehome Hill just back of the Normal School, and look at the sunset from this hill. One evening, I was accompanied by a young lady friend who enjoyed painting landscapes. She had painted this scene overlooking Bellingham Bay, and she playfully remarked that I should paint this scene in a word picture. The next evening was a beautiful one, so after dinner I took paper and pencil and went alone to the top of the hill. It was about half an hour before sunset. By twilight I had finished my picture.

A PICTURE you would have me paint,
In words which I may choose;
Give all the tints of shades and sounds,
Of form and life which there surrounds?
My scanty sense of perfect tints
Will scarce permit, or lend me aid,
To paint into a concrete whole
The scene which now thrills thru my soul.

Alone I sit on Sehome's brow
As dewy eve draws on just now,
And at one glance, I can, perchance,
Take in a picture grand.
I now begin my paints to mix,
And paint my picture as if fixt.

For background, in the distance then,
I scatter isles and sky,
In haziness they then recede,
Unite, grow dim, and die.
Beneath these spectral grayish hues,
Which ocean's mists have formed,
I draw a line tho indistinct,
Along the nether side,
To bound the bay where waters play
Thruout the livelong day.
Shades manifold, of green and gold,
Upon her ruffled surface play.

To left there rise into the skies
The islands' rough bound forms,
While at their feet a silv'ry sheet
Of sunlit waters play.
(As if the welkin way had dropt
From heaven's dome o'erhead).
To right, the Bay's uneven strands
Grow plainer, show her whitened sands,
Until the city breaks the views
Of Nature's own rich, gorgeous hues,
And plants herself like some proud elf
Within my picture, too.

Serene and quiet, tho never still,
As if pushed on by stubborn will,
My brush into the foreground plays
And shapes the wondrous bay—
That mobile form which e'er transforms
At bidding of the winds.
Upon her breast there lay at rest
A dozen ships or more.
Their spars are reft of sails that heft
Each one upon the sea,
And there they nestle close about
The guardian anchors, strong and stout.

In yonder left, far south of west,
The sun in splendor sinks;
His powerful light has lost its might
And softened into gold—
Ah, yes, and gold enriched by red—
He sinks 'midst eve's caress.

As if to bid a last "good night,"
The heavens retain the richest light,
And sifts it o'er her spacious dome,
A signal she is left alone.
She lingers, pales, pines, and moans,
"Alas, Today, good night, my own."

And now, my friend, my picture's done,
So take it at its worth;
'Tis worth but nought, real Art is brot
Forth from The Artist Hand.
That Artist Hand hath shaped mere man,
Endowed him somewhat, too,
He sees real art which fills his heart,
But ne'er can it express.
Thus finite man scans God's great plan
And tries to imitate,
And I surmise, some time, some how,
He'll greet us in the skies.

ERE SLUMBERS CLOSE YOUR EYES

It was a custom for several years previous to my marriage to write my future wife a letter each Sunday evening, she being in the East, while I was in the West. At the close of each letter we used to copy a little thot which we had selected from our reading during the previous week. On this particular evening I had just returned from church where I had heard a sermon on the Power of Prayer. I wrote this little thot as a "Good-night" thot and enclosed it in my letter. Later, after our marriage, my wife liked the thot so well that I had a number of them published as mottoes to give them to friends who likewise liked the sentiment expressed.

BEFORE you close your eyes in sleep,
And enter dreamland's realm,
Just think of Him who guides your life—
The Captain at Life's helm.

Just lift to Him a prayer of thanks
For blessing thee today,
And ask of Him an angel guard
To hover round thy head—
Then, close your eyes in slumbers light,
While angels guard thee thru the night.

WHEN WE TALK HEART TO HEART

Written one evening while sitting in the presence of a young lady whose helpful companionship inspired the following thot. It was in response to a request that I write a thot for her to carry with her during an absence.

WETHINKS sometimes, when thou art
near,
And we talk heart to heart,
That greater power to apperceive
The truth is ours, in part.

Our souls soar high to other worlds
Where none but we may roam,
And there, with thee, I talk alone,
Of joy, and peace, and love, and home.

The cohorts of the heavenly throng
Obey our each command,
And thus we live in joy and bliss
In that fair and lovely land.

We see the greater life some lead,
And judge our own thereby,
And thus we strive for grander heights,
With stronger lives we vie.

We hear the songs so few have heard
When we talk heart to heart;
The music which thrills thru our souls
Is recompense in part.

We do the acts which lift our lives
From selfishness to love,
And hence we tend to nobler heights,
And wend our way above.

Then may those moments come more oft
When our two souls take flight,
And carry us into those realms
Where all is pure delight.

CANOEING

While camping on the shores of Lake Washington, near Seattle, during the summer of 1907, I frequently saw young people out canoeing. Just beyond our camp was a beautiful cove called Lover's Cove. Many times the young people carried with them books or fishing poles to while away the time, but when they got around to this cove they usually gave up their reading or fishing and began lovemaking. Coming along the trail one evening, I saw a friend of mine in a canoe with a girl friend, nearing Lover's Cove. I returned to our camp, sat down and wrote the following and left it in a book which he was reading.



WHEN the evening shadows fall
On the lake and on the wall,
And the silv'ry moon is rising over all,
It is then the time to go
Out upon the lake to row,
Or to paddle your canoe, don't you know?
For it's then, just like a dove,
You can coo your note of love,
While the stars are shining brightly, just above.

Just for show you take a book,
Or perhaps a pole and hook,
But the place for which you're bound is a nook,
Where it's all so very still—
Just a ripple from a rill—
Just the place to tell your love with a will;
And it's there in that retreat
That Her voice, so low and sweet,
Whispers just the words you'd hear, so discreet.

Then, when home again you row,
Why, you paddle—just—so—s-l-o-w,
That—you—hardly—seem—to—go—don't you
know?
When the hour to part draws near,
Why you feel so lonely—queer—
That you want to linger longer while she's near.
Yet, you both decided, too,
That the time in which to woo
Is a moonlight night while paddling a canoe.

THE FALLING LEAVES

In Point Defiance Park, at Tacoma, Washington, there is a large bridge built of logs. Just beneath and a little above this bridge there is a pool alongside of which is a rustic seat. One afternoon in the late fall of 1909 I was sitting on this seat as the leaves from the overhanging trees were falling. Taking a notebook from my pocket I wrote hurriedly the following, completing it in less than half an hour.



REMEMBER well when springtime breeze
And sunny glances drew thee
Slow peeping forth from out thy coat
Of sombre hues which hid thee.

I remember, too, when summer's sun
To emerald green had changed thee,
And how thou clungst tenaciously
When gales oft tried to loose thee.

I never shall forget thy shade
Which thou oft threw to shield me,
When August's sun, in blazing wrath,
Tried hard to scorch and tan me.

I saw thee, too, when Autumn's king
Transformed thy hues forever,
And blushing gold and crimson, too,
Thy forms began to quiver.

And yet thou still remained true
To boughs which long had borne thee,
In gala robes thou sat'st in state
While passers-by adored thee.


But now I see thee at my feet,
All crumpled, brown, and faded,
I saw thee fall from yon far height,
Which still with leaves is laded.

To dust I know thou must return
And all the world forget thee,
But thou hast taught me still to love
The God who once begat thee.

So thru this life one that I'll keep
When hopes fall fast about me—
To do life's work as best I can,
And trust in God to keep me.

'TIS THE BITTER WHICH SWEETENS THE JOY

Late one winter's night I returned to my room thru a rainstorm. I was quite discouraged, as a heavy cold had threatened me with pneumonia. Lighting my fire I sat before it for some time wondering if I would ever be able to accomplish anything in life. On the table lay a book of poems. I opened it and read that sweet, sad poem beginning with the line "The day is cold and dark and dreary." I retired but could not sleep. Later I arose and sat down and wrote the following.

HE night is dreary and the wind is weary,
Without it is dark and cold;
The rain beats boldly, and the fire burns slowly,
Yes, the night is dark and cold.

My life is dreary, and my mind is weary,
Within there are strifes untold;
There lacks all the beauty that should go with duty,
So my life is dark and cold.

Nay, nay, thou art blessed, it must be confessed,
That life should have some alloy;
Thy weakness it strengthens, thy life's thread it
lengthens,
'Tis the bitter which sweetens the joy.

So blow on, thou wind, and torrents descend,
And fill all the night with thy gloom;
Thou art the alloy which sweetens my joy,
Instead of foretelling my doom.

YOU

One afternoon while attending school at Bellingham I was sitting in the library reading when a young lady friend with whom I had been keeping company for several months passed my chair and leaned over and whispered, "Hello, you." Later in the afternoon I wrote the little thot entitled "You," and handed it to the young lady that evening.

YOU—just a thot came to me,
Refreshing, bright, and clear,
Flitting by in retrospection,
Hovering closer, ever near.

YOU—just a thot from God's own mind,
Placed in plastic clay,
Ever changing, ne'er remaining
What you were but yesterday.

YOU—just a word that's ever speaking,
Full of joy and helpfulness;
Giving strength where strength is wanting,
Filling life with blessedness.


YOU—just an act that's ever acting;
Never finished, ne'er relinquished,
Consummate perfection thine,
Urging on this soul of mine.

'Tis you and I, two thots I link,
Two words spoke from above,
Two acts wrought out in life, methinks,
And therefore made to love.

TWILIGHT THOTS

The twilight hours have always been the most pleasant part of the day to me, and for many years I enjoyed going out alone during these hours, contemplating on different topics. One beautiful evening while spending the summer at my old home at Kirksville, Missouri, I sat down on the porch and wrote the following.

SILENCE

 THOU harbinger of mind's strange themes—
Dreams, fancies,—all that thou dost bring—
To thee I dedicate, I consecrate, Today's
Last waking moments, Tonight's first vigil's
praise.

This present Now, which Time has lent to me,
I give to thee, thou creature sent
To tell me to stop and think, to be discreet,—
Yea, to be discreet, and so I think, then sleep.


THE REALMS OF SLUMBERLAND

Silently Night gathers about her those robes of sombre
hues,
Places upon her head a crown of diadems—the myriad
stars,
Advances in the wake of Day, sprinkling the earth
with dews.
Stooping to hush the birds and flowers to peaceful
dreams,
She whispers, "Be still, sleep now, to thee sweet dreams."

She beckons me my work to cease, my cares release,
To linger just a while, to stop and think, then close
my eyes,
While she sings lullabies, to soothe me off to sleep;
And thus, I too, with birds and flowers, obey her
sweet command,
And soon I wander off into the realms of slumberland.

DISCOVERED—MY PA

Written at Ritzville, Washington, October 1, 1912, upon the birth of my little son, Chilton Lavoie Allison.



GUESS that fellow bendin' over my crib
is My Pa;
I guess that fellow whose talk is so glib
is My Pa.

I've not been here long, my days are but three,
But there's one thing that even a baby can see—
There's one man in town who toots loud for me—
He's My Pa.

I guess that man whose hat won't fit
is My Pa;
I guess that fellow who thinks he is it
is My Pa.

He's a short fellow, too, as proud as he can be,
Yet that sweet-faced lady an' I both agree,
That the one who talks of nothing but me
is My Pa.

I guess that the man who wears the big grin
is My Pa;
I guess that man, so short and so thin
is My Pa.

My mother is that beautiful lady in white,
With a voice like an angel singin' at night,
But that proud, struttin' fellow, I know him all right,
He's My Pa.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

In the summer of 1907 while camping along the shores of Lake Washington, I heard one day of the death of a little golden-haired child which had been playing near our camp. I had not paid any particular attention to this child until I heard of its death. Soon afterwards I thot I would write the mother a note of condolence. Trying to gather my thots I took a stroll along the shore of the lake. Before going far I heard a shot, and proceeding in the direction from which it came I saw in the trail a bird which had just been shot. It was only a common waterfowl, but it seemed to impress me more particularly at this time than would have usually been the case. Returning to my camp, I sat at a table which we had placed under a madrona tree in front of the tent. As I started to write a leaf from the tree fell upon my paper. This seemed to work right into my line of thot, for here were plant, animal, and human life taken away by death. Each seemed to typify certain portions of the last verse of the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians. All of a sudden it seemed as tho I had begun to remember a poem and hurriedly I copied the thot, which I later gave to the mother.

‘TWAS only a leaf that fell just now,
From the madrona’s bough o’erhead;
’TWAS only a leaf that winged its flight
From the living to the ranks of the dead.

’TWAS only a leaf, all withered and brown—
Just one of a million or more;
So why should I care when this one falls,
When there’re others just over my door?


’TWAS only a bird that fell just now
From the hunter’s shot hard by;
’TWAS only a bird whose song contained
Just a note in its lullaby.
’TWAS only a bird of a myriad throng,
That filled the wild dell with its glee,
So why should I care when this one dies,
When there’re others to sing for me?

’TWAS only a child that fell today,
By Time’s harsh reaper’s hand;
’TWAS only a child that left this earth,
Just to join in an angel band.
’TWAS only a child with golden curls,
That filled the whole day with its glee,
So why should I care when this one leaves,
When there’re others to shout for me?

Why should I care?—It's plain to see
That we love them, each one and all,
For purity, love, and innocence,
Are the ties by the which they enthrall.
The leaf, by its faith in a Providence' care;
The bird, by its hopeful song, so rare;
The child, by its love so pure and sweet;
Ah, these are the reasons why I should care!

THE DEATH KNELL OF THE YEAR

While spending the Christmas holidays in 1908 with my sister at Prosser, Washington, I took a walk of several miles on the last evening of the year. Just about sundown I reached the summit of a high, bare mountain overlooking the Yakima Valley. It was during my return walk that the following took shape in my mind. Upon arriving at sister's home I sat down and wrote "The Death Knell of the Year."

LOW sinking down yon western sky,
Beyond bleak hills so white,
The sun, far southward in his course,
Shall soon give way to night.
And as the lengthening shadows fall,
So ghostlike, o'er the landscape drear,
I feel their solemn import now,
'Tis the death knell of the year.

A dying year—how sad the thought—
So soon laid in its shroud,
A year which seemed so full of hope,
So promising and proud
Must die, as sinks yon blood red orb,
And take its place with those
Within that realm of "Use-To-Be,"
Where live past joys and woes.

Good-bye, old year, thou gave'st to me
Thy share of happiness,
Thou strewed'st my way with roses fair—
Sweet flowers of blessedness.
And now, I pray as thou art borne
To thy silent tomb—the Past—
That I may bury with thee there,
All thoughts that should not last.

CAMPING

While spending the summer at Ocean Park, Washington, I went on a camping trip with sister and several friends, across the bay to the mainland. The country was wild and heavily wooded. We would spend our time fishing trout, gathering berries, shooting, eating and sleeping. One evening, after having spent a day tramping thru the forests, I lay down on my blanket before retiring and wrote "Camping."



HERE'S a time that I love 'twixt the
spring and the fall,
When a fellow feels right for a jaunt,
When he wants to go out just to rough it
about,

Like a wild deer in its haunt.
Put on overalls, a sweater and shirt,
Just to wallow around like a bear;
You bet, that's the time that we boys all agree,
As a one when we're free from all care.

Shoulder an ax, and a gun, and a pistol or two,
And a tent, and two blankets or more;
Some bacon, and salt, some spuds, then we halt,
For it's these and nothing else more.
Take a hike for the woods where nobody lives,
But the deer and the big grizzly bear,
And then roam about and fish for the trout,
Are the joys of which few are aware.

When the meal hour is near and you're most
starved to death
It is then that camp life is grand;
You break up a stick and kindle it quick,
Put the spuds to bake in the sand.
Then the bacon you'll fry on the top of a rock,
That's a smooth one you've picked from the
brook,
Cut a fork from a sprout, and then fry your trout;
Such an art was ne'er bettered by cook.

When the night time draws near and it's quiet
and dark,
Just roll in your blankets and snore,
For there's nothing to hurt you save 'skeeters and
ticks,
It's just these, and nothing else more.
When the first signs of day are streaking the east,
And the bright stars are fading away,
You're ready to rise, as bright as the skies,
For a ramble thru another whole day.

So the days come and go, all too quickly for us,
When the bacon and spuds are all out,
Then we shoulder what's best, and leave all the rest,
And strike out for home, oh, so stout.
It is these of all year, that are bright and all cheer,
And that cause us to lead a sweet life,
For in Nature's own home is the one where I'll roam,
And forget all my trouble and strife.

BREAKING CAMP

On the last day of August, 1907, Amor Foster and I broke camp at Lake Washington, preparatory to our going to our school work, Amor going to Bellingham, while I went to Tacoma where I was to teach. We had eaten our lunch at camp, after which we began to pack our grips. Before taking down our tent, I told Amor I wanted to write a little thot and nail it to a board and stick this board on the spot where our camp had been so that passers-by might know that this spot was near and dear to someone. The following thot was written and left there. Two years later I returned to Seattle and went out to our old camp. I found the board still there, but the paper with "Breaking Camp" upon it was gone.

AOOD-BYE, dear old camp, we're going away,
But we're sad, when we had it to learn;
Endeared hast thou grown for thou are
enthroned

In our hearts, and for thee we shall yearn.
We're going away for another whole year,
To our work where for thee we shall sigh;
But the memories sweet, of that fond retreat
In thy bosom, shall follow us nigh.

When memory calls back at the close of the day,
Which has burdened us sore with its care,
The thots of the hours,—those dear, precious hours,—
In this folds, when, as free as the hare,
We nestled inside of thy sheltering folds,
Or roamed the wild woods in our joy,
Ah! these are the thots that rest us so oft,
And take from our lives its alloy.

The times that we read and the tunes that we sang,
And the swims that we had in the lake;
And the rows that we took and the fish we would hook,
And the apples which oft we would bake;
And the berries we picked on the hillside near by,
All the walks by the lake's ruffled shore,
Ah! these are the sweets which each of us greets,
But, good-bye, dear old camp, they're no more.

Where today there are shouts of camp life so gay,
And the wild woods are ringing with glee,
Tomorrow's bright sun will have scarcely begun
To run his doomed course over thee ;
Till silence so drear shall follow his course,
And the clouds shall all weep till they're reft,
And the birds will not sing, lest to mourn they shall
bring
All the woodland which late was so blest.

Good-bye, dear old camp, we're going away,
May thy memories sweet follow us,
And make us more pure, that we may endure,
All life's hardships in joyfulest glee.
And tho soon overgrown thou shalt be by the fern,
And the wild vines shall trail o'er thy way,
Yet so close thou always art to old Nature's throbbing
heart,
That we'll long for thee and come to thee again some
day.

THE TORRENT

About twelve miles out from Tacoma, on the interurban car line to Steilacoom, just before the line comes out to the Sound, there is a little station where one leaves the car to walk up to the insane asylum. The trail leading there roughly parallels a beautiful little torrent, which stream empties into the Sound a few hundred yards below the station mentioned. One Saturday afternoon in the autumn of 1909, I rode out to this place thinking I would catch an inspiration for a thot. After walking to the source of the stream, a spring, I retraced my steps to its mouth, a distance of about two miles. I sat down on the sand there and wrote the following.

NITHER, thither, yon and there,
Circling gracefully everywhere,
Rushing on o'er pebbled bed
May be heard the torrent's tread.

Starting from some tiny rill,
Rushing pell-mell down the hill,
Gathering speed at every turn,
Ocean bound all may discern.

Now I see its silver hue
Turn again to deepest blue,
As it rushes on o'er stone,
Then subsides in eddies lone.
Gracefully it moves along
Chanting weirdly its wild song.

List, in treble notes so clear,
Comes its warble to my ear;
Then far off in sweet refrain
Echoes back the alto's strain.
From some chasm's depth I hear
Dull, deep gutterals so drear,
Then, as 'gainst some stone it rolls,
A clear tenor it unfolds.

So they all unite in time
Giving forth melodious chime.
Thus by Nature's orchestra

Am I thrilled and held to pay
My poor tribute for the song
Which the torrent brings along.

Bubbling streamlet, ever bring
Just the song you love to sing,
For to me thou always art
Expression of a Loving Heart.
Tho sometimes your way seems lost,
Jostled rude, and roughly tost,
Thou dost ever, onward flow,
Always forward, just as tho

Some sure hand of guiding friend
Led thee to thy course's end.
So, dear babbling, warbling stream,
Take my thots and let me dream
Of the power that guides my life
Up to God thru pain and strife.

And perchance as thou dost flow
Toward the ocean far below,
Where, serene, thy course shall be
Swallowed up eternally,
So may I contented be
Journeying toward Eternity,
Where, fore'er I'll live above,
In that boundless sea of Love.

DRIFTWOOD

While walking one evening along the beach at Ocean Park, Washington, I noticed that the tide had brot to shore a great lot of driftwood. Taking another walk the next evening along the same way, I noticed that the tide had come in again and carried a lot of this drift back to sea. Sitting down on a log I wrote "Driftwood."

AS to the shore the driftwood floats,
Borne in by the flooding tide,
It there remains while tide regains
Its outer ebbing side.

It lays there thus for days and days,
Beside the other drifts;
The sun's bright rays there bleach it white,
Perchance before it shifts.

At length a rolling wave comes in
And bears it out to sea,
And there it whirls, like children play
Unhindered in their glee.

Upon the bosom of the sea
The drift is borne from shore,
Until the tide, with wind allied,
Its course is turned once more.

Again it drifts in to the shore
And lingers there awhile;
Amongst the drift with other wood,
It lays in shapeless pile.

So thus between the sea and land
The driftwood spends its time;
It touches, lingers, and then parts;
Leaves naught for thots sublime.

So are our lives upon life's sea
Tossed hither, yon, and there,
Some circumstance may throw us where
Some heartfelt pain we'll share.

We touch some lives each day we live,
As tide-tossed we are borne,
And we little dream that we're supposed
To think of those forlorn.

But unlike drift, which never gives
Aught of itself worth while,
Shall we not meet and greet each one
With a kindly word and smile?

LIFE'S WEB

One morning while taking a walk from my room to school I noticed that the hillside was covered with myriads of cobwebs, upon which the dew had collected. The morning sun shone upon these webs, bringing them out in bold relief. This gave rise to the analogy to life, which seemed to be composed of an infinite variety of threads, all of which united into a whole. After going to school I went to the library and wrote the following.



MYSTERIOUS, but simple still, is life's
unfolding web.

Each day we see the silken strands we
weave,

But silken-like, they float away at eventide,
And ere the morning's gold drives back the duller
gray,
The strand is lost, to give another play.

We little think from day to day we spin aught else
but strands,

Until, some moment, unaware, we catch a glimpse
of life

(As when into the fountain's pool one looks into
its depths,

And sees far through the waters clear the pebbles'
various forms),

And see a web, the strands of which are former
acts transformed.

Since life is ever weaving, thread by thread,

Into a unity, translucent, well defined,

It matters much, since this frail form spans time,

Fixt 'twixt heaven, the limit, and earth, the variable
sort,

What enters it, to make more beauteous, or distort.


So, take each golden moment then as though it
were the last,

And fit in it, as in the ring the jeweler fits the
sparkling gem,

The richest thought or act thy life's storehouse
then holds;
And when before thy Creator, thy life's web's
brought to light,
'Twill sparkle in radiant beauty in His own
precious sight.

THE UNDISCOVERED REALM

The theme of anticipation has always been a pleasant one upon which a young person likes to dwell. While living in Tacoma I enjoyed the association of a number of young people whose Sunday School teacher I happened to be. One evening, one of the boys came to my room and wanted to discuss with me the thing for which he seemed to be best fitted. He was a young man with dreams of fame, yet who did not seem to count the Present as having any great bearing upon his future status. I told him I would think over the thing and try to analyze his case, giving my interpretation of his present state of mind, but that he himself must work out its solution.

 HERE'S a beautiful theme which to you I'll suggest,

Of a mystical realm somewhere,
In which there are joys of a manifold kind,
And of gems so rich and so fair.

The friends which we'll meet in that strange blessed
land

Shall be helpful and ever more real,
And the homes we shall have shall be mansions of stone,
With imposters we never shall deal.


The toil we shall do shall tire us not,
The songs which we sing shall be gay;
The sickness which oft robs a life of its joy
Shall bother us not in that day.
The birds shall sing sweeter by far than they do
In this land of infinite sound;
Sweet mockingbird's notes shall come from their
throats,
And the nightingale's strain shall abound.

The breezes shall blow in soft zephyrs so low,
And sweet music shall lull us to sleep;
And Today's little woes, and Tomorrow's death throes,
Shall not cause us to moan nor to weep.
The flowers shall still bloom, nor shall they be doomed
To die in the fall of the year;
And we shall be strong, of a numerous throng,
And of no one shall we have any fear.

Perhaps you would know, and are thinking I'm slow,
Because I won't tell you the place,
But I know not myself but from what I can hear,
Nor from that source can any one trace
The footsteps that lead to that mystical realm,
Where the tear never falls there for sorrow,
But somehow, and somewhy, I imagine it must
Be the land of the "Unreached Tomorrow."

MYSELF

Introspection, as a means to self-help, has always been an interesting line of thot to me. One evening while indulging in this line of thot, I tried to picture myself as I really am. In reflecting over various thots and acts in my life I was amazed to find myself always face to face with unexplainable reasons why I spoke or acted in certain ways, hence the conclusion that life is mysterious.

YSELF, and all that in me is,
By experience gained and kept;
By observation, or from being taught,
By reason, inhibition, from being bought—
All love, all power, insight—all traits—
All everything that's myself's or fate's—
I count it all mysterious.

I thot I knew my strength was small,
But it baffled giant's powers;
I thot I knew where the wild fowl flew,
But vain was my search for hours.
I thot I knew the plans by which
Men's minds are drawn or sundered,
But I find it still mysterious.

I crossed a path as I strolled along,
And fair it seemed to me;
Thru meadows green, by streamlets pure,
Its course seemed just to lead
To the path I trod toward Desire's end,
But soon it turned its course's trend,
I count it so mysterious.

Myself—God's secret in this house,
So plain it seems to be,
That each new thot, or word, or deed,
Should be a natural consequence
To me, whose own it is for aye;
But still I must confess my straits,
I count myself mysterious.

UNDERSTOOD

One evening while attending a New Year's party, my future wife had accepted an invitation to attend this party with another young man friend, she thinking I would not be able to be there. I arrived late. During the evening we were playing a game, in which the young people were paired off. As she drew her partner our eyes met each other. Later in the evening we were asked to write ten or twelve lines of verse to be read. I wrote the following.

‘ WAS just a glance, that’s all,
But I knew you understood.
My thots were thine, no need of time,
Nor voice, nor proof divine.

When two souls reach those heights
Where linger fond delights,
Each understands the other’s thot
For both were by like teaching taught.

Since thru the eyes the soul beams forth
Its pent-up feeling’s troth,
You knew just what I meant perchance
When for an answer I gave one glance.

O BEAUTIFUL BELLINGHAM BAY

Written one afternoon while sitting in the library of the Bellingham Normal School, just prior to going on a launch party out on the bay.

O BEAUTIFUL Bellingham Bay,
How quiet and peaceful she lay,
A silv'ry sheet nestling close to the feet
Of the mountains wild and gray.

Thou makest me think of the day,
Thou wonderful Bellingham Bay,
When Nature's own hand shaped thy every strand,
In her reckless, careless way.

She fringed thine own westerly bound
With rock-ribbed isles from the Sound,
Threw in whitened sands to silver thy strands,
Enriching thy nether bound.

On thy sun-greeting shore to the east,
Lay Bellingham, far from the least
Of cities that boast of a numerous host,
And a homestead by the sea.

To northward and westward there rise,
Cutting deep thru the stretch of the skies,
Olympic's proud peaks, Dame Nature's strange
freaks,
Just to awe us, I surmise.


Thy southernmost reach stretches far,
To Ocean thy gates are ajar;
The tide ushered in, rushes back once again,
Thru Deception's dangerous bar.

O Beautiful Bellingham Bay,
Thou art grander day by day,
I love thy shores, with richest lores,
And I sing to thee this lay.

TODAY


While in school at Bellingham I was editor of the school paper, called "The Messenger." One evening as I sat in the office editing the copy a friend came in and upon being asked how she was replied that it had been an unsatisfactory day for her as everything she did seemed to go wrong. After a few minutes she went out, and another friend came in. In reply to a similar question the response was so cheerful that the contrast between the two people was quite noticeable. Both had been seemingly under the same environment during the day, yet one had a bad day while the other had a glorious one. Before leaving the office the two thots brought out "As Some People See Today" and "As Other People See Today."

AS SOME PEOPLE SEE TODAY



TODAY? Yes, today is but the allowance
Time gives to sun and moon,
To run their certain course thru the
Limitless expanse of the heavens;
Just a stitch which Father Time
Has taken in weaving Eternity;
Just a few hours for sun to shine,
Just a few hours to weep,
Just a few hours for man to toil,
Idle awhile, and then to sleep.

AS OTHER PEOPLE SEE TODAY

 TODAY—a rich and sparkling gem, from God's
storehouse of Time,
Set full with four and twenty hours, mere specks,
so infinitely fine,
So rich, so grand, so full perchance,
That I have caught but just one glance;
Improved so few of moments true, and scarce begun, yes,
left undone
A thousand things that would have brot me nearer God—
the Perfect Thot.

Today, which from Eternity wrung recognition for its
worth;
Worth? What worth a day in Eternity's sight
When ceaseless aeons are not a mite—
Nay, less a lightning flash at night?
“What claim has today,” the Ages ask,
“For raying Father Time to check the speeding hours
of its own day?
Is it more rich, more full, more gay,
That man might wish it to delay?
Do its few hours bring greater dowers than other
passed days?
Does its sunshine at ev'n decline with shades more
manifold?
Or are its hours like those of ours, and those which
yet shall be?”

O mournful Past, why dost thou grasp my unused, fair
Today!
Its opportunities are at my command,
While yours are far from touch of hand;

So I love Today, for from it I may gain truth and help-
fulness;

But you have gone, ne'er to return, so you I must, I will
e'er spurn.

Oh, grant me, thou Infinite One, true meaning of Today.
And from its fleeting hours so few, grant me just this one
boon—

To see, to act, to consummate some noble deed for Thee.

THE OLD CHERRY TREE

Along in the month of May, 1908, I was planning to take a trip from Tacoma back to my old home at Kirksville, Missouri. A few weeks previous to my trip I wrote my mother, asking her if she would speak to our old neighbor, Mrs. Smith, asking her if she would leave some cherries for me to pick when I got home. Earlier in life I had frequently picked the cherries from an old tree in this neighbor's yard. A week or ten days later I received a letter from mother in which she said the old tree had died and had been cut down. This information give rise to the thot contained in "The Old Cherry Tree."



HAT! is the old cherry tree which stood by the shed—

My old cherry tree, tell me true, is it dead?
Yes? Oh, scarce can I believe it, for so short
time ago,

I saw it, I touched it, I climbed its boughs low.
But you say it is, and has now been cut down.
Well, 'twill seem very lonesome to return to the town,
And to come to the home to which often I came,
And not see the tree there, which, always the same,
Gave forth from its dome-shaped form overhead
Its riches of fragrance, its cherries so red.

Oh, oft have I risen in the morn's early dawn,
Tript down from my room, and out on the lawn,
And looked toward the dear old tree 'cross the way,
And dreamed of the harvest I'd pluck during May,
As caught from the zephyr, its fragrance so sweet,
Which, borne on the wings of the morning, I'd greet.
I've wondered so oft as I saw it in bloom,
So pure and so white, if in heaven there's room
For the flowers which on earth have budded and blown;
Ah, I would that my way with such sweetness were
strewn.

Ah, well do I know too that some later there came
The falling of petals, like snow on the main;
And tho Beauty was ruthlessly torn from the bough,
I never once questioned the Why, nor the How,
For it must needs be that the petals must go,

And leave opportunity for the cherries to grow.
So I greeted their falling without any pain,
Just knowing full well that the fruit would retain
All the sweetness of petals, which, multiplied oft,
Would round into fruitage so rich and so soft.

Ah, well do I know too that May came at last,
When, all in a cardinal robe, crown and sash,
The cherry tree rose to the rank of a king,
While at his feet humbly my homage I'd bring.
But far more haughty were the robin and jay,
Who pecked at the rubies he wore for display.
Till from sheer consternation lest his beauty be shed,
I climbed up its shoulders, and onto its head,
And with my own hands from the kingly tree drew,
The gems from the crown and the robe's scarlet hue.

Ah, oft I recalled when his garments I've stript,
I've watched the bird robbers as often they tript
Thru the emerald branches, still hoping to find
A ruby red cherry I'd left there behind,
But when disappointed, they flew far away.
I've wondered if God would again send the day
When they would return to the old cherry tree
For another rich feast and more bickerings with me;
And if thru the seasons which bring the cold snow
He'd shield them from hunger, and suffering, and woe.

Ah, yes, I remember when autumn's frost king
Oft chilled the tree's leaves, until they could cling
No longer onto the kind sheltering boughs,
For unto the earth they must then pay their vows
For the richness of joy thru the fair summer clime,
Ah, yes, to the bosom of that mother divine,
They must go once again for a long winter's sleep,

Nor show signs of grieving, nay, none ever weep,
For the old cherry tree had long since found out
That the sleep of the winter would wake in spring sprout.

Yes, the old tree is gone, with its leaves and its fruit,
But still mem'ry holds, tho sadly, and mute,
The thots of what was, which I shall e'er hold,
As a fond recollection more precious than gold.
I shall thank my dear God for the joys that it brot,
For the lessons sublime which often it taught,
For the beauty in life I may glean day by day,
For the fruitage of character which swells on life's way,
For the hope of an immortal life in the sky,
Where friends and the cherry trees never shall die.

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